Current weight management practices for Veterans with SCI/D across the VA system of care

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Project Summary/Abstract

Note: This project was submitted through the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) Program as a Rapid Response Project (RRP) designed to address particular focused needs in response to identified performance gaps. It is a four site study; Palo Alto is one of the participating site.

Anticipated Impacts on Veterans' Healthcare:
Identifying and addressing weight management barriers has the potential to prevent negative consequences due to obesity and weight gain in Veterans with chronic SCI/D, who are already predisposed to numerous complications and chronic conditions as a result of metabolic issues. There is limited documentation on what is successful, feasible, and suitable for implementation at VA facilities for successful weight management in Veterans with chronic SCI/D. Identification of what and how weight management strategies (for obesity treatment and prevention) are being used across SCI Hub and Spoke facilities is key to facilitating weight management programs for persons with chronic SCI/D. Hence there is a critical need to clearly understand current weight management practices for Veterans with chronic SCI/D across the VA SCI/D System of Care (Hub and Spoke facilities).

Project Background/Rationale:
An estimated 53-66% of individuals with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) are considered overweight or obese according to their body mass index. This places these individuals at increased risk for numerous negative health consequences and chronic conditions, and contributes to additional impairments among persons with SCI/D in performing crucial activities such as transfers, wheelchair pushing, and ambulation. Through the MOVE! weight management program, VA has targeted overweight and obesity in the general Veteran population. It has been established that persons with chronic SCI/D need to participate in weight management strategies; however, information specific to what is being done currently and what works for weight management in the national chronic SCI/D Veteran cohort is unknown.

Project Objectives:
The purpose of the current study is to gain a better understanding of current weight management practices among Veterans with chronic SCI/D, to build on concurrent SCI-QUERI obesity-related efforts and work toward the long-term goal of implementing VA's MOVE! weight management program in the chronic SCI/D cohort. The study aims are 1) to identify facility/system level current weight management practices, barriers, and facilitators to treat overweight/obesity and 2) to identify facility/system level current practices, barriers, and facilitators to providing preventive weight management in Veterans with chronic SCI/D.

Project Methods:
This project will employ a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and consists of two phases. The Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research will be used to guide the development of data collection tools and to guide data analyses. In the first phase, focus groups will be performed at 3 SCI Centers and 3 SCI Spoke Sites, with VA facility staff who are involved in SCI/D care and who are likely to be involved with weight management programs. Outcomes include current weight treatment and prevention strategies, barriers, and facilitators. Qualitative data will be analyzed using a grounded theory approach by trained qualitative researchers. In phase two, semi-structured telephone interviews will be conducted at all 23 SCI Centers (n=23) and a 20% random sample of SCI Spokes (n=30). Outcomes will include qualitative and quantitative measures of weight treatment/prevention practices, interactions with MOVE!, and organizational readiness for change constructs.